

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EURE-00 CIAE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
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P R 291319Z AUG 77
FM AMEMBASSY ANKARA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8675
INFO AMEMBASSY ATHENS
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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: MILI, MPOL, TU
SUBJECT: TURKISH MILITARY COMMAND CHANGES

REF: (A) ANKARA 6255 (DTG 221329Z AUG 77 (NOTAL), (B) ANKARA
6227 (DTG 191425Z AUG 77) (NOTAL)

1. SUMMARY: LOCAL PRESS AND PUBLIC INTEREST HAS CONTINUED
CONCERNING THE ANNUAL AUGUST ROUND OF MILITARY COMMAND CHANGES,
NOTABLY APPOINTMENT OF NEW GROUND FORCES (ARMY) COMMANDER
(REFTELS). SPECULATION OVER WHO IS TO TAKE OVER GROUND
FORCES COMMAND-- PRIMIN DEMIREL'S REPORTED NOMINEE THIRD
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ARMY COMMANDER GENERAL ALI ESENER -- HAS CONTINUED TO STIMULATE
COMMENT IN PRESS OVER EXTENT OF GENERAL POLITICAL INFLUENCE
IN MILITARY APPOINTMENTS. END SUMMARY.

2. A RETIRED ARMY GENERAL, WRITING IN MODERATE DAILY "MILLIYET"
AUGUST 25, COMPARED PRESENT IMPASSE OVER NAMING OF GROUND FORCES
COMMANDER (REFTELS) TO APPOINTMENT OF GENERAL FEVZI MENGUC AS

TURKISH GENERAL STAFF (TGS) CHIEF IN 1957 (MINGUC LATER STOOD TRIAL AFTER 1960 COUP), INTENSE PUBLIC SPECULATION SURROUNDING COMMAND APPOINTMENTS SUBSEQUENT TO 1960 MILITARY INTERVENTION, AND SITUATION IN 1970 WHEN THERE WERE TWO OR MORE STRONG CONTENDERS FOR THE GROUND FORCES COMMAND POST. "MILLIYET" ARTICLE GENERALLY DEPLORED POLITICAL INFLUENCES ON MILITARY APPOINTMENTS AND URGED THAT THE "HIERARCHIC SYSTEM" (I.E., UP-AND-OUT ON BASIS OF SENIORITY) BE SCRUPULOUSLY FOLLOWED.

3. LATE LAST WEEK AT HIS RETIREMENT CEREMONY, GENERAL FARUK KORALP, EX-COMMANDER OF TURKISH AIR FORCE (TAF) AIR DEFENSE COMMAND WHO COULD HAVE BEEN POSSIBLE SUCCESSOR TO TAF COMMANDER GENERAL ETHEM AYAN, PUBLICLY AIRED HIS DISAGREEMENT WITH CURRENT SENIORITY POLICY WHICH CAN COMPEL RETIREMENT OF GENERAL OFFICERS IN THEIR MID-FORTIES. KORALP ALSO CRITICIZED SUPREME MILITARY COUNCIL (SMC) FOR RUBBER-STAMPING SENIOR OFFICER ASSIGNMENTS, RATHER THAN EXAMINING ALL CASES IN DEPTH AND MAKING PROMOTION AND ASSIGNMENT RECOMMENDATIONS INDEPENDENT OF THE MILITARY HIGH COMMAND AND CIVILIAN GOVERNMENT (SEE USDAO IR 6-896-0745-77, DTG 290500Z AUG 77, FOR ADDITIONAL DETAILS).

4. ON AUGUST 26, POPULAR DAILY "GUNAYDIN" REPORTED THAT PRIMIN DEMIREL WROTE TO PRESIDENT KORUTURK URGING RATIFICATION OF GENERAL ESENER'S APPOINTMENT AS GROUND FORCES COMMANDER. HOWEVER, PRESIDENT REPORTEDLY RESPONDED THAT HE WOULD NOT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ENDORSE ESENER'S APPOINTMENT, BUT WOULD ALLOW THE POSITION (AND THREE OUT OF FOUR FIELD ARMY COMMANDS) TO BE FILLED ON BASIS OF SENIORITY RATHER THAN DECREE. "GUNAYDIN" CONCLUDED THAT FIRST, SECOND AND THIRD ARMY COMMANDERS, ERSOZ, OLCAY AND ESENER, WOULD BE RETIRED ON AUGUST 30 AND THAT THE MOST SENIOR ARMY COMMANDER WOULD TAKE OVER THE GROUND FORCES COMMAND.

5. IN SIMILAR VEIN, ABDI IPEKCI COMMENTED IN "MILLIYET" AUGUST 26 THAT PRESIDENT KORUTURK HAS DECIDED TO EXERCISE HIS CONSTITUTIONAL POWER AND DISCRETION TO APPROVE OR DISAPPROVE MILITARY COMMAND NOMINATIONS. (COMMENT: CRUX OF IPEKCI'S ARGUMENT IS WHETHER PRESIDENT HAS AUTHORITY TO DISAPPROVE AS WELL AS TO CERTIFY NOMINEES FOR MILITARY COMMAND POSITIONS. IPEKCI, ALONG WITH THE REST OF THE OPPOSITION PRESS, HAS ASSERTED THAT THE PRESIDENT HAS DISCRETIONARY POWERS IN THIS RESPECT). IPEKCI SAID THAT KORUTURK HAS BEEN "VERY SENSITIVE" IN ADHERING TO LEGAL FORMS REGARDING MILITARY APPOINTMENTS, AS OPPOSED TO PRIMIN DEMIREL WHO EMPHASIZED HIS "POLITICAL RESPONSIBILITY" FOR MAKING SUCH DESIGNATIONS. FINALLY, IPEKCI PREDICTED THAT IF PRIMIN DEMIREL REFUSED TO BACK DOWN ON GROUND FORCES COMMANDER ISSUE, POLITICAL CRISIS "WORSE THAN THE CURRENT

ECONOMIC CRISIS" WOULD RESULT.

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6. IN THE WEEK-END'S PRESS, PRIMIN DEMIREL WAS REPORTED AS SAYING WITH RESPECT TO MILITARY COMMANDER ASSIGNMENTS THAT TURKEY IS RULED BY LAW, AND "WHATEVER THE LAWS CALL FOR WILL HAPPEN." DEMIREL AGAIN DENIED THAT THERE WAS DISSENSION WITHIN THE GOVERNMENT OVER THESE APPOINTMENTS. MORE SPECULATIVELY, "GUNAYDIN" AUGUST 28 SAID THAT FOURTH (AEGEAN) ARMY COMMANDER GENERAL KENAN EVREN WOULD BE ASSIGNED GROUND FORCES COMMANDER, WHILE MASS CIRCULATION DAILY "HURRIYET" AUGUST 28 MAINTAINED THAT CANDIDACY OF NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL SECRETARY-GENERAL NURETTIN ERSIN IS "GAINING STRENGTH." ARGUMENT AGAINST ERSIN APPOINTMENT, ACCORDING TO "HURRIYET", IS THAT HE HAS NOT SERVED AS COMMANDER OF FIELD ARMY, TRADITIONALLY A PREREQUISITE FOR
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ACCESSION TO GROUND FORCES COMMANDER POSITION. HOWEVER, ERSIN CMMADED TURKISH FORCES IN CYPRUS IN 1974 AND HAS HAD BOTH COMBAT AND COMMAND EXPERIENCE. (BOTH ERSIN AND EVREN HAVE THE SAME DATE OF RANK). LASTLY, "MILLIYET" AUGUST 28 SAID THAT PRIMIN DEMIREL AND PRESIDENT KORUTURK HAVE COME TO AN AGREEMENT REGARDING THE COMMAND POSITIONS, AND THAT NEW DESIGNATIONS WILL BE MADE AFTER AUGUST 30 CEREMONIES FOR RETIRING GENERAL OFFICERS (NOT FURTHER IDENTIFIED).

7. PERHAPS INDICATIVE OF THE EXTENT OF DISAGREEMENT OVER THIS ISSUE, "HURRIYET" AUGUST 29 UQOTED ANNOUNCEMENT BY PRESIDENT'S OFFICE THAT KORUTURK WOULD NOT BE RETURNING TO ANKARA FOR "VICTORY DAY" AUGUST 30 WHICH COMMEMORATES THE GREEK DEFEAT AT DURLUPINAR IN 1922, BUT RATHER WOULD PARTICIPATE IN CEREMONIES IN ISTANBUL WHERE HE IS VACATIONING. CUSTOMARILY, THE PRESIDENT HAS RETURNED TO ANKARA FOR THIS OCCASION, AND "HURRIYET" REPORTED "SOURCES CLOSE TO THE PRESIDENT" AS SAYING THAT THE REASON FOR THIS DECISION IS THE FAILURE TO REACH AGREEMENT ON A NEW GROUND FORCES COMMANDER.

8. COMMENT: IN RESOLVING THE COMMAND CONTROVERSY, IT APPEARS THAT THE GOT WILL FALL BACK ON THE SENIORITY SYSTEM, I.E., ALLOWING ERSOZ, OLCAY AND ESENER TO RETIRE ON AUGUST 30, AND MOVING UP EITHER EVREN OR ERSIN INTO THE GROUND FORCES COMMANDER POSITION. SEVERAL OTHER IMPORTANT SLOTS IN TGS AND IN THE ARMED SERVICES, INCLUDING THE FIRST, SECOND AND THIRD ARMY COMMANDER POSITIONS, REMAIN TO BE FILLED AND THE FINAL APPOINTMENTS (TRADITIONALLY DUE ON THE AUGUST 30 HOLIDAY) CANNOT BE PREDICTED WITH CERTAINTY.

9. SUBSEQUENT TO DRAFTING OF FOREGOING, TURKISH NEWS AGENCY REPORTED AFTERNOON AUGUST 29 THAT THIRD ARMY COMMANDER GENERAL ESENER HAS RESIGNED. NO FURTHER DETAILS WERE GIVEN.

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Message Attributes

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